

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5528

As Passed House
April 15, 1993

Title: An act relating to court fees.

Brief Description: Altering court fees.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Law & Justice (originally sponsored by Senator Quigley).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Judiciary, April 2, 1993, DPA;
Passed House - Amended, April 15, 1993, 87-9.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 15 members: Representatives Appelwick, Chair; Ludwig, Vice Chair; Padden, Ranking Minority Member; Ballasiotes, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Campbell; Chappell; Johanson; Locke; Long; Mastin; H. Myers; Riley; Schmidt; Scott; and Wineberry.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 1 member: Representative Tate.

Staff: Patricia Shelledy (786-7149).

Background: Superior Courts are authorized to collect fees for certain court services. Fees for some services are as follows:

- Filing noncourt documents and agreed probate documents: \$2
- Garnishments and writs of attachment: \$5
- Filing a will: \$2
- Preparation of passport applications: \$4
- Records search with written report: \$8 per hour
- Copies of audiotapes or videotapes of court proceedings: None specified.

Many people who file for divorce represent themselves without the assistance of an attorney. Some counties have provided a "courthouse facilitator" under a temporary grant program for low income pro se litigants. The courthouse facilitators do not provide legal advice but help litigants with basic information.

Summary of Bill: Fees for the following Superior Court services are raised or imposed as follows:

- Filing noncourt documents and agreed probate documents: \$20
- Garnishments and writs of attachment: \$20
- Filing a will: \$20
- Preparation of passport applications: Same fee as authorized by the federal government (currently \$10).
- Clerks' special services: Not to exceed \$20 per hour.
- Copies of audiotapes of court proceedings: \$10
- Copies of videotapes of court proceedings: \$25

A county may create a courthouse facilitator program to provide basic services to pro se litigants in family law cases. The counties may impose user fees or may impose a surcharge of up to \$10 on family law case filings to pay for the program. Revenue collected will be placed in a separate account to fund the program.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: Fees for these services have not been raised for years and have not kept pace with the cost of providing the services.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Kay Anderson, Washington Association of County Clerks (pro); and Debbie Wilkie, Washington Association of County Officials (pro).